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KT photo | **Tim Bath**

House of Burgess: 'Lordy, I hope there are tapes'

Comey testifies; Congress demands memos, recordings

By Rob Burgess
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During a quieter news cycle, we'd have time to contemplate some of new FBI director nominee Christopher Wray's potential conflicts of interest.

"In private practice at the Atlanta office of King & Spalding LLC, Wray specializes in white collar and internal investigations," reported CBS News June 7. "In 2015, the firm consulted with Russian energy giant Rosneft. ... A 2016 version of the site shows that among those he had recently

represented was, 'An energy company president in a criminal investigation by Russian authorities.' The 2017 version of the website omits this line."

Alas, the circus continues. As I wrote in my May 17 column, "Trump's 'Tuesday Night Massacre,'" President Donald Trump abruptly fired FBI Director James Comey May 9. The termination letter based the firing on the recommendation of Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. Trump repeatedly admitted Comey's Russian election meddling investigation was the true reason.

As I wrote in my May 24 column, "Trump himself the leaker of info," The Washington Post first reported Trump asked the director of national intelligence, Dan Coats, and Adm. Michael S. Rogers, the director of the National Security Agency, to publicly deny the existence of any evidence. In Senate Intelligence Committee testimony June 7, Coats and Rogers refused to answer questions about these reports.

Also June 7, Comey released a seven-page opening statement to the Senate Intelligence Committee. In it, Comey said Trump kept bringing up his job as if to create a "patronage relationship." After being sworn in Thursday, Comey called Trump a liar. He refused to say whether the president had obstructed justice. Comey told the senators Robert Mueller, special counsel, would investigate. The assembled Republicans seemed determined to miss the point. (And poor Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona, seems to think

vanquished Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton was being investigated for colluding with Russia.)

Sen. James Risch, R-Idaho, quibbled with the word “hope” in Trump’s statement, “I hope you can see your way clear to letting this go,” in reference to the investigation into Gen. Michael Flynn, former national security adviser. Please. We all know what it means when a boss “hopes” something out loud.

“In 1179, December 27th, Henry II said, ‘Who will rid me of the meddlesome priest?’ and the next day, [Thomas Becket] was killed,” Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, told Comey. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Florida, complained about leaks and also chided Comey for not standing up to Trump.

“I don’t want to make you sound like I’m captain courageous,” Comey said. “I don’t know if I would have said to the president with the presence of mind, ‘Sir, that’s wrong.’”

Trump had previously threatened Comey on Twitter, insinuating the existence of Nixonian Oval Office recordings of their conversations. “Lordy, I hope there are tapes,” Comey said. Still, Comey was insistent upon rallying bipartisan support in defense of America. “The Russians interfered in our election during the 2016 cycle,” he said. “It was an active-measures campaign driven from the top of that government. ... They’re going to come for whatever party they choose to try and work on behalf of, and they’re not

devoted to either. ... They think that this great experiment of ours is a threat to them.”

Comey said he shared his contemporaneous memos, which he made clear weren't classified themselves, with New York Times reporter Michael A. Schmidt via Daniel Richman, Columbia Law School professor. “I worried it would be feeding seagulls at the beach if it was I who gave it to the media,” he said.

After Comey's testimony, both the House and Senate requested Trump's tapes and Comey's memos. “I'll tell you about it over a short period of time,” Trump said during a Saturday press conference in the Rose Garden, as to whether the tapes even existed. “I'm not hinting at anything. ... You're going to be very disappointed when you hear the answer.”

Lordy, I hope there are tapes.

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